

AUDIO & CINEMA EM CASA

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COMPARATIVO



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TEST PrimaLuna ProLogue Two



Primaluna is a recent brand on the market. After having seen many brands appear and disappear just as easily, everything seems to tell me that this one came to stay...
Meet the Prologue Two.

by
Luís Mota

It's not only the brand that is new. Even the country of origin is not quite a reference to the audiophile world. Coming from The Netherlands, Primaluna invaded the tube market with one of the best arguments one can present to the consumers – price. Indeed, if you look at the end of this review, you'll immediately notice that this kind of prices is rarely associated with tube amplifiers. And when you listen to the quality of the sound... But we'll get there!

Before that, we must do a descriptive presentation of this “baby”. With the majority of its components coming from China – where did you think the low price was coming from? -, this Dutch brand brings a technical know-how that has been accumulated throughout three decades and shared by several famous high-end brands. Thus, the newness is really the brand, as the human factor behind Primaluna is more than experienced in this business.



Well Built

Coming out of the box, we've got a strong and simple steel chassis, richer in depth than in width, contradicting a little bit the geometric generality of the majority of the hi-fi equipment that we have at home. This integrated amplifier, older brother of the (also integrated) Prologue One, is massive and, therefore, you won't need any special support equipment to arrange it in the audition room. The fact that it weighs the respectable, though not excessive, 16 kilograms will also help. Delivering 40 W, with 4 RCA lineinputs and the outputs adjusted to 4 and 8 Ohm speakers, this Prologue Two has all the fundamental characteristics to satisfy most of its potential users' needs. Peeking in, I contemplated an extremely clean layout, with point-to-point connections and good ventilation on the tube sockets; namely, 2x 12AX7, 2x 12AU7 and 4x KT-88. The volume potentiometer is ALPS and the capacitors are Nichicon and Realcap, which means that this is all material of the first water.

From what I could know about this brand, I was immediately pleased with its after-sales philosophy: the buyer shouldn't do anything with his amplifiers but replacing tubes or fuses!

Being in this business for quite a while, I know what this represents to the costumers. My Jadis are a good example since they don't need any other maintenance either... Thus, the Primaluna offers this marvellous usefulness of automatic bias for the tubes by a servo circuit with fuses on each of its elements. About maintenance, you'll also have to dust the equipment. Better, if you have a housekeeper... Hurray to the convenience!

I have mentioned above that most of the components were made in China but the transformers are produced in Uncle Sam's country. For any reason, the Dutch must have found that there wasn't any Chinese component manufacturer that satisfied the requirements of Primaluna.



PrimaLuna ProLogue 2

Specs	Data
Tube Complement	4 x KT-88, 2 x 12AX7, 2 x 12AU7
Inputs	4 pairs RCA
Outputs	4 & 8 Ohm Speaker Taps
Power	40 Watts per channel
Frequency Response	20Hz - 30 kHz +/- .5 dB
THD	1%
SNR	89 dB
Input Sensitivity	300 mV
Input Impedance	65k Ohms
Weight	17 Kg
Dimensions (L x W x H)	39,5 x 28 x 19 cm



In regard to that, we must say that the quality of the audio products made in China increased significantly since the beginning of this fashion. If ten or fifteen years ago the Chinese material tended to have multiple defects, today China is becoming a commercial monster capable of doing anything just as well or even better than what is usually built on the West (without forgetting Japan). And, of course, the prices are truly unbelievable!

Auditions

The Prologue Two was combined with the Dunlavy SC-II speakers and the source was up to the Audiolab 8000 CDM-DAC.

The first things I noticed after the first auditions were the intensity and size of the sound of the Prologue Two. These are, in any case, the most important characteristics of the output tubes of this equipment. In fact, when I see the most popular output tubes such as EL34, 6550, KT-90 or KT-88 again, these usually carry the idea of "brute force".

One of the advantages of owning an amplifier with a strong and witnessed sound is the fact that we don't need to turn the volume potentiometer very much to get a satisfactory sound pressure level. What I mean is that this is not a machine that will be heard at late hours of the night neither will it disturb your neighbours. The dynamic that it grants to some of the recordings is amazingly impressive.

Now, some of you are wondering: How can 40W sound so powerful? That's the way tubes are, otherwise it wouldn't be possible to get majestic acoustics as many of us already witnessed with the 300B at 4 W.

This Prologue doesn't deceive anyone in regard to other things related to tube acoustics for it also presents a rich and warm sound.

As far as the basses are concerned, I had some pre-conceived fears regarding its performance. I was afraid that equipment with this price wouldn't be capable of a significant performance. I was wrong. After all, that great acoustics wouldn't be easily achieved if it wasn't for the extension and articulation of the bass – the foundation of every great sound. A fat and slurred bass? It's insignificant and exclusively in the most complex recordings. Not very much indeed... It's surprising how this "baby" can take such good advantage of its price.

As far as the trebles are concerned, without being explicit, they expand very well, holding back only in the extreme, and, let me say it, intelligently. The smoothness with which they are introduced clearly shows its sound that specifies the presence of the tubes and politeness, contrasting nicely with the solid base of the basses.

At first sight, these two aspects could suggest a divided sound but that doesn't apply, there is no such emphasis on the medium-high scale. I don't know what kind of magic the Engineers of Primaluna put into Prologue Two but the fact is that there's something to it.

In terms of tone, the presentation is very rigorous, both in small ensembles and in big orchestras, allowing us to effortlessly distinguish all the participants and instruments. The way that it doesn't dissect the sound, exposing it to our ears for our appraisal and enjoyment instead, is one of the most important facts that contributes to the pleasure of listening to music, not drawing our attention to the way acoustics are being resolved – the emotional side overlaps the analytical one. This is one of those characteristics that outstands any equipment on its category and this Prologue Two is one of the best examples that I currently know.

Other aspect that contributes to a relaxed audition is the stage presentation. Neither in the front row nor in the last, in the middle of the room instead. Not being in the front, we're not permanently trying to mentally distinguish the smallest details of what's happening right there in front of us, not being in the back of the room, we're not "standing on tiptoe" sneaking out to the front and distracted from the music.

Conclusions

Even if this Prologue Two is at its best in classical music and jazz, pop and rock will also go very well thanks to the rhythmic coherence inherent in the amplifier.

If I had point out any flaw, given that it isn't musically legitimate to demand anything else from this equipment at this price, it would be the light noise that comes out from the speakers when they're turned on. It is audible only when we get close to the cones of the speakers and no record is playing.

In conclusion, what we've got here is an integrated tube amplifier of exceptional quality, economic, of entire sound, that plays everything very well even the not-so-good recordings. We can't deny this is one of the best purchases of the moment, whose upgrade can only be justified when spending much more money. ■

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